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Contact: Rick Tilton, Public Utilities: 645-6622

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Scott Varner, City Council: 645-6798

Mayor And City Council Urge President to Reverse Cuts to Clean Water State Revolving Fund

White House Plan will further burden Central Ohio's Families

(Columbus) Ratepayers in Columbus and across Central Ohio will be forced to bear higher water and sewer bills to pay for upgrades if President George W. Bush's proposed cuts to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund are enacted. Mayor Michael B. Coleman and City Councilmember Patsy A. Thomas are rallying support to protect the long-standing Federal revolving loan program that is a crucial piece in building Columbus' and all American cities sewer line infrastructure, which is key to building the region's economy and protecting the environment.

"The Federal Government should be a strong partner with cities and invest in the future by continuing proven programs like the Clean Water Fund - that is the only fair way to prevent pollution and continue to build healthy neighborhoods," said Mayor Coleman. "Slashing the Clean Water Funds is another short-sighted move that forces the problems down-stream onto the backs of every family, homeowner and business that has to dig deeper into their pockets to build sewers."

Mayor Coleman pointed out that federal grant dollars in the 1970s and 1980s supported 75% of the cost to construct centralized sewers in Columbus and other cities. As grant funds have been cut, the State and Federal governments continue to mandate massive construction projects and costs have increased for all communities investing in safe, sanitary centralized sewers.

"Columbus residents should be outraged by this unfair treatment from Washington," said Councilmember Thomas, Chair of Council's Utilities Committee. "We all want clean water to drink and safe waterways to enjoy. Tighter and tougher federal restrictions have already forced residents to pay more for sewers and infrastructure. This latest move will only put more of the burden on our taxpayers."

The White House has proposed to cut the Fund in Ohio by another 6%, or \$11.7 million. Only New York and California face larger percentage cuts. Columbus uses the loan program to borrow money at low interest rates to build sewer projects that are part of the Wet Weather Management Plan. The \$2.5 billion, 40-year investment plan will sharply reduce pollution in local waterways and significantly decrease the cases of basement backups across the City. The Plan,

once completed, will bring Columbus into compliance with Consent Orders signed with the State of Ohio in 2002 and 2004.

Mayor Coleman today joins leaders from across the state of Ohio, in calling for support of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Public Utilities Director Cheryl Roberto will participate in press teleconference with the Ohio Environmental Council at Noon, Tuesday, March 14.